

North Carolina

Office of School Readiness

Department of Public Instruction

The Office of School Readiness has a mission to prepare children for school success through high-quality early education. The office supports preschool programs throughout North Carolina, in public schools and licensed child care centers, including:

- Even Start Family Literacy
- Head Start – State Collaboration Office
- More at Four Pre-Kindergarten Program
- Preschool Exceptional Children
- Title I Preschool

The Office of School Readiness promotes high-quality early childhood educational opportunities that children need in order to be ready for school success. High-quality preschool programs promote development of the whole child across all five domains of development and learning that are fundamental to school readiness. High-quality programs actively engage children in hands-on learning and meet the needs of each individual child. These programs also promote the active involvement of families in their children's education.

The Office of School Readiness provides funding, policy development and planning, standards, collaboration, professional development, teacher licensure (nonpublic schools), technical assistance, monitoring and evaluation to support public schools and child care centers in providing high-quality preschool.



SCHOOL READINESS DEFINED

The condition of children when they enter school, based on the five domains of development:

- Health and physical development
- Social and emotional development
- Approaches to learning
- Language development and communication
- Cognition and general knowledge

The capacity of schools to serve all children effectively.

– *School Readiness in North Carolina*
Ready for School Goal Team (2000)

The Office of School Readiness works to strengthen collaboration among early childhood agencies and programs at the state and local levels, including the public schools, child care, Smart Start, the Division of Child Development, NC Early Intervention Services, Head Start, and other programs toward our common goal of school success for all children. In continuing North Carolina's long and rich history of early childhood initiatives, the Office of School Readiness strives to strengthen the efforts of preschool programs to meet the needs of North Carolina's preschool children and ensure their later success in school and life.

*Preparing children for school success through
high-quality early education.*

MORE AT FOUR PRE-KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM

The More at Four Pre-Kindergarten Program is a high-quality pre-k program that serves children who are at risk and prepares them for success in school. Pre-kindergarten is a research-proven strategy for school readiness.

Children served by More at Four attend a full school day, full school year program that meets high-quality state standards. The program is community based. It is integrated with other early childhood programs in the community and administered at the county or regional level. Children participating in More at Four may be served in classrooms in the public schools, licensed child care centers or Head Start programs.

The More at Four program is especially beneficial for those children most at risk of school failure. According to independent evaluation findings by the FPG Child Development Institute, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, children served by More at Four exhibit substantial growth in key areas including language, literacy, math and social skills.

North Carolina is one of the top two states nationally for state pre-kindergarten quality standards, according to the National Institute for Early Education Research, including standards such as teacher education and training, class size, staff-child ratio, and early learning standards. Children's experiences in More at Four are rooted in North Carolina's early learning standards for preschoolers, called *Foundations*. These standards incorporate the five domains of development and learning fundamental to school readiness: approaches to learning, emotional and social development, health and physical development, language development and communication, and cognitive development. More at Four teachers engage children in active learning with a focus on each domain.

Children in More at Four:

- Learn about letters, colors, shapes and numbers
- Learn to develop positive relationships with peers and teachers
- Listen to stories and learn about books
- Explore math, science, art and music
- Expand language skills
- Develop a positive sense of self and an enthusiasm for learning
- Explore and play outside daily

More at Four staff value the diversity of children and their families and are responsive to the needs of individual children.



ELIGIBILITY

The program is available to children who are four years old by August 31 of the program year, will be entering kindergarten the following year, and are at risk for poor school outcomes. Factors that put children at risk for poor school outcomes include low income, limited English proficiency, identified disability, chronic health condition and developmental or educational need. Children of Active Duty military families are also eligible. Priority is given to eligible children who have not been served in any other preschool or child care program.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the agency that administers the More at Four Program in your county. A list of county contacts is available at www.osr.nc.gov. At the state level, contact the Office of School Readiness at (919)981-5300 or visit the web site www.osr.nc.gov.

TITLE I PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS

A Title I Preschool is a program of high-quality educational experiences designed to enable young children to meet challenging state standards. Although Title I allows its preschool programs to serve children from birth up to age five, most North Carolina Title I Preschools serve four-year-olds only. These programs usually follow the school calendar and school day, and are staffed with both a licensed teacher and highly qualified teacher assistant.

Curricula used in Title I preschools must be comprehensive, research-based, and aligned with North Carolina's early learning standards. The learning experiences offered in a Title I preschool promote growth in all developmental domains, including language, literacy, math, physical, emotional and social development.

To ensure that children enrolled in Title I preschools make progress, teachers monitor their growth in an ongoing manner. Observation, work samples, and classroom notes are used to provide information that helps teachers plan appropriate instruction.

Family involvement is an integral component of all Title I Preschool Programs. Communication between home and school strengthens the family's knowledge and understanding of their child's development and allows parents and teachers to work together to plan appropriate learning experiences. Teachers use a variety of methods to involve parents in the education of their child, including home visits, conferences, and written communication.



ELIGIBILITY

Children living within the local program's designated attendance area are eligible to apply for admission to the Title I Preschool Programs. Selection is based on academic need. To identify those with the greatest need, local programs design a selection process that utilizes multiple criteria, such as parent interviews, teacher observations, and developmentally appropriate measures.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact your local public school system administrative office for further information on Title I preschool programs offered in your area. At the state level, contact the Office of School Readiness at (919) 981-5300 or visit the web site www.osr.nc.gov.

PRESCHOOL EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

Since 1991, the Public Schools of North Carolina have entitled all three-, four-, and pre-k five-year-old children with disabilities to a free and appropriate public education mandated through the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B, Section 619 legislation. This includes:

- Evaluation that does not discriminate against any child;
- A Handbook of Parents' Rights and Procedures Governing Programs and Services for Children with Disabilities;
- Services provided in natural environments that are like those used by children without disabilities;
- An Individualized Education Program (IEP) which is comprehensively explained in the Handbook of Parents' Rights;
- Special education and related services (such as speech, occupational therapy, physical therapy, transportation, etc.); and
- A process for parents or guardians to appeal decisions about educational services or placement.

In North Carolina:

- Over 15,000 three-, four-, and pre-k five-year-old children are currently receiving services through the Public School Part B preschool program.
- Special education services must be provided by a Birth to Kindergarten or Preschool Add-On licensed teacher.
- Related services must be delivered by appropriately licensed personnel.
- Services are flexible and may be provided in private schools, child care centers, family child care homes, public schools, Developmental Day programs, Head Start programs, state-operated programs, and university or community college-affiliated early childhood programs.
- Children who have been served in the Part C (infant-toddler) program and who are eligible for the Part B Preschool program should have a seamless transition between programs and have an IEP in place by their third birthday.
- The Part B Preschool programs may be blended with Title I, Even Start, Smart Start and More at Four funding.
- Over 70 percent of the preschool children with disabilities are served in settings with their non-disabled peers.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the local public school system administrative office in your county for further information on programs for Preschool Exceptional Children. At the state level, contact the Office of School Readiness at (919) 981-5300 or visit the web site www.osr.nc.gov.



EVEN START FAMILY LITERACY

Even Start is a comprehensive family literacy program intended to help break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy and improve the educational opportunity of low income families. These programs integrate early childhood education, adult literacy, and parenting education. North Carolina's Even Start Program focuses on the educational needs of the whole family. It supports the philosophy that the educational attainment of children and their parents are interrelated, and that improving the literacy skills of parents results in a positive effect on the educational experiences of their children.

North Carolina currently funds 14 projects: Ashe County, Asheboro City Schools, Bertie County, Burke County, Caldwell County, Craven County, Cumberland County, Greene County, Lee County, Lenoir County, Forsyth County (Quality Charter School), Richmond County, Rutherford County, and Washington County.

Even Start grant applications must be submitted as a collaborative endeavor between a public school system and a nonprofit organization (community-based organization, public agency, or community college). The public school system must act as the fiscal agent for the project. Projects are funded for four years, with required reviews and continuation applications submitted to the Department of Public Instruction at the end of each year.

PARTICIPANTS

Participants in the Even Start programs are parents deemed eligible for involvement in an adult education program under the Adult Education Act and their children from birth to age 7. To be eligible, at least one parent and one or more child must participate together in all four components of the Even Start project (early childhood, parenting, parent and child interaction and adult education).

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For the 14 participating counties listed above, contact the local public school system administrative office in those counties for further information. At the state level, contact the Office of School Readiness, at (919) 981-5298 or visit the web site www.osr.nc.gov.

HEAD START-STATE COLLABORATION OFFICE

Head Start is a federally funded, comprehensive preschool program designed to meet the emotional, social, health, nutritional, and psychological needs of 3- and 4-year-olds and their families. Head Start helps develop social competencies in children and promotes self-sufficiency through a comprehensive family-focused approach.

The Office of School Readiness houses the NC Head Start-State Collaboration Office through a grant from the federal Office of Head Start, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Head Start supports collaboration through grants to states to create a visible partnership at the state level to support the development of multi-agency and public/private partnerships that will enhance early childhood services for children and families. Collaboration of Head Start programs with the state-funded pre-kindergarten program is one of the highest priorities of the Head Start-State Collaboration Office. Despite its federal-to-local program structure, Head Start recognizes that the states play an important role in the formulation and implementation of policies and initiatives that affect low income children and their families.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the NC Head Start-State Collaboration Office at (919) 431-2005 or visit the web site www.osr.nc.gov.